



Beekeepers Association of the ACT

PO Box 1482, Woden, ACT, 2606

Newsletter of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Incorporated

Website: www.actbeekeepers.asn.au

Meetings of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT Inc are held on the second Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm at the CIT, Heysen Street, Weston in Building A

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July 2006

Next Meeting

Mid-Winter Dinner

The CIT College is not available during July to hold a meeting so instead we will hold our Mid Winter Dinner on 13th July at the Woden Tradesmen's Union Club at Restaurant 88.

Come any time after 6.30pm to enjoy a selection of Chinese food, soup, roasts, vegetables, salad, desserts and tea or coffee.

We will meet at the club at 6.30 but members who are unable to come early may join us at any time.

The food is served from a buffet. The cost of the meal will be \$15.80 for adults and \$9.90 for children under 12 years. There is a discount for Seniors and for Tradesmen's Club members.

I would like to give the club approximate numbers so they can set aside an area for us so please let me know if you are able to come. The front desk will have a list of names so there will be no need for non-members to be signed in.

Please phone Lyn Shiels on 62862421 or email editor@actbeekeepers.asn.au

President's Note:

Canberra had its coldest June in half a century, so I hope you and your bees are keeping warm.

Our June meeting was warmed by the buzz of chatter about lots of wonderful things that every beekeeper would love to own. Yes, it was our annual and ever popular 'Gadget night'. Members pondered what one strange gadget could be used for and even by the end of the evening I think it remained a mystery to all, including its owner!

As usual, some gadgets were home-made, like the melted wax/honey separator made from a baking tin, while others were favourite purchases, like the tray sugar-syrup feeder with the bee-ladder that could be filled without exposing the bees to the winter chill.

As always some gadgets were big, like the home made electric hand drill powered extractor and the swarm collecting bucket-bag on the end of an extendable pool-pole, while some gadgets were small, like queen catchers and the hive tool with the hammer-head on the other end.

John Rice brought along a collection of electronic personal emergency radio beacons – EPERBs. John explained how they alerted the emergency services via satellite that a rescue was required – a valuable gadget for beekeepers working in remote locations.

As with every 'Gadget night', much discussion and examining of gadgets continued into the tea/coffee and cake section of the evening. Thank you to all members who brought along their gadgets.

Dave Alden

Beekeeping Course.

Don't forget that the Backyard Beekeeping Course at the CIT School of Horticulture, Weston will begin on October 10th. This is a good way to get started with beekeeping. Members of the Beekeepers Association will be teaching the course of four evening theory sessions (7.00pm-9.00pm) in the classroom and four Saturday morning practical sessions (10.00am-12 noon) conducted at beehives located at the CIT, Weston.

Topics include bee biology and behaviour, handling bees, getting started, equipment, seasonal activities, pests and diseases, and extracting. For enrolments phone CIT Solutions on 6207 4441.

Tool of the Month

David Lillis has made a handy trolley from an old baby “umbrella” stroller for moving boxes of honey around the yard or apiary. A box is fixed onto the stroller frame and a hinged lid has been made to cover the frames and keep the bees out.



Beekeeping in Winter

For hobby beekeepers winter is usually a quiet time when the bees will largely look after themselves if the beekeepers autumn preparation was good. An occasional check of the weight of the hives to make sure there are still sufficient supplies should be all that is required.

In Canberra it is usually possible to check hives during winter if there is a concern. Choose the middle of a wind-free, sunny day when the temperature is at least 12 degrees and make the inspection as quickly as possible so the hive is not chilled. You should have already reduced the size of the entrance to about five centimetres as this will help the bees maintain warmth for the cluster.

It is also important that the hive should be tilted so that any moisture that accumulates will run forward and out of the hive. Excess moisture is much more harmful to bees than cold alone.

If a hive is short of supplies and must be fed remember that the mixture should be in the ratio of two sugar to one water. Dry sugar feeding is also a possibility at this time. There is a good article on feeding on our website for anyone who needs additional information about feeding or consult any good beekeeping book.

This is a great time to mend any damaged boxes or frames and make up new equipment ready for spring and summer. Boxes can be painted up and frames wired ready to go. Leave the wax foundation until closer to the time the frames will be needed.

Some members may have been inspired by Dick Johnston’s talk on mead making to have a try for themselves. Local brewing shops have all the supplies and advice needed to get you started with your first batch of mead.

Beekeepers’ Future Under Threat

Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Alby Schultz, is pursuing government options for new training courses to encourage new entrants to the beekeeping industry.

Mr Schultz has written to the Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran, on behalf of beekeepers and orchardists, who face serious threats to the futures of their industries.

In the beekeeping industry, a shortage of educational facilities and skilled workers is threatening to undermine not only the honey bee industry, valued at \$65 million and which provides some 1000 jobs, but the entire agricultural sector in Australia.

"The sustainability and viability of many agricultural and horticultural industries relies on insect pollination," Mr Schultz said.

"A recent survey stated that 60pc of all crops in Australia required insect pollination, the majority of which is performed by industry managed bees.

"However, despite the significant contribution bees make to our agricultural sector, the only two beekeeping courses available in Australia were shut down many years ago."

Mr Schultz has recommended the Government investigate options for the development of appropriate research and training facilities to support bee keeping in Australia.

Thanks to Bob Shaw for finding and sending this article. This and many other items of interest may be found at http://www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=34960

Bungendore Beekeeping Workshop

A beekeeping workshop (*not an Association activity*) will be run by Mulloon Creek Natural Farms, Bungendore on the 5th and 6th of August.

Details including costs, bookings and timings can be obtained from the organisers on (02) 6238 1395 or on the Web at <http://tinyurl.com/gfspl> (a 455KB PDF file)

Empty Super Awards

Entitled... 'What could have got into them?'

Dave Alden is well known in our family as a man of action – particularly where home maintenance is concerned. What he lacks in terms of a delicate touch he makes up for in brute force. Consequently, he specialises in knocking things down and digging things up – otherwise known in the extended family as 'the scorched earth policy in action'.

Just before Easter last year Dave's sights fell upon the old ivy covered shed in the middle of the garden which suddenly 'just had to go'. To give you an idea of the landscape of this sorry tale, the far corner of the old shed was formed by an even older nectarine tree. About a metre behind the tree sat our 2 beehives nestled against the fence. Any bee leaving or entering the hives had to navigate around the shed and the tree.

The weekend before Easter saw Dave up at the crack of dawn, tearing down the shed like a man possessed. Towards the end of the weekend only bare soil and a huge pile of mess was left where once stood the shed. Not yet satisfied with his efforts, as the Sunday sun went down over the back fence Dave revved up the chainsaw and took down the old nectarine tree.

Monday and Tuesday mornings we awoke to the steady thud, thud, thud of Dave's fencing post thumping into the ground as he dug out the surprisingly stubborn tree roots.

Wednesday and Thursday morning saw Dave up before work, dragging the remains of the shed, tree branches, roots and stump round to the front of the house, to pile up the trailer ready for a weekend trip to the tip.

Now, a lesser man than Dave might have thought to take a well earned rest as the Easter long weekend kicked off. However, as I mentioned before, Dave is a man of action.

Good Friday dawned and no sooner had the hot cross buns been consumed than Dave announced, "Those bees have

been a bit feisty in the garden this week. I don't know what's got into them. I reckon I should get into those boxes, take off some of the honey and have a look at what's going on."

So our intrepid and tireless handy man donned his bee suit and got handy once more. He tackled the hives with his usual novice enthusiasm and took off a dozen frames. As we watched from the kitchen we noticed some unusual, quite frantic arm waving, but it was difficult to interpret their meaning at that distance. Dave reconstructed the boxes with surprising haste and made a mad dash for the back door.

"Um...I don't think you should go in the garden for a while" he announced, "they seem a bit excited...I'm not sure what's got into them!"

As he made for the bathroom he added, "Do we have any calamine lotion at all?"

Well it seems that a full week of bashing, banging and crashing, and the vibrations of the chainsaw and the thumping of the fencing post, coupled with a complete change in the topography of the garden had convinced the bees that an environmental catastrophe had indeed occurred. And when that same catastrophe came and opened up their boxes and robbed them of their hard earned honey, there was only one course of action left to them.... ATTACK!

We spend the long weekend trapped in the house, with sentry bees posted at every door ready to drive us back inside if we so much as thought about going out.

As the family members applied liberal amounts of calamine lotion to their numerous stings, the washing stayed on the hills hoist untended, and the trailer remained stacked and unmoved in the driveway, Dave shook his head despondently and muttered, "I just don't know what could have got into them!"

Submitted by Elaine on behalf of the Alden family



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